

Alere®

9500 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
Suite 500
Rosemont, IL 60018

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
BOLINGBROOK, IL
PERMIT NO. 181

BLCADFALL10

This information is background only and is not a substitute for your doctor/healthcare providers' advice.
© 2010 Alere. All rights reserved. Alere is a trademark of the Alere group of companies.

Cherry Juice for Better ZZZs



Have trouble sleeping? Wouldn't it be great if there were a *healthy* drink to help you snooze? Turns out tart cherry juice may be just the ticket, according to a new small study.

A team of researchers from the University of Rochester and the University of Pennsylvania studied the sleep patterns of 15 older adults. Volunteers drank eight ounces of tart cherry juice in the morning and evening for two weeks. They drank a non-cherry juice for another two weeks.

The results, published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*: Participants got 17 more minutes of shut-eye, on average, while sipping the cherry juice.

Researchers aren't certain why. But they suspect it's cherry juice's high melatonin content. Melatonin is a hormone that regulates sleep.

Getting enough sleep is key to our health. Studies have linked a chronic lack of sleep with an increased risk of medical problems, including high blood pressure, weight gain, depression and type 2 diabetes.

FYI: Cherries also contain high levels of antioxidants and other super-healthy nutrients like vitamin C, betacarotene (vitamin A) and potassium. So it's all-around healthy.

Sweet dreams!

Alere®

SMART LIVING with Coronary Artery Disease

Fall 2010



IN THIS ISSUE:

Should You Get the Flu Shot?

Can Anger Hurt Your Heart?

"Secret" Weight Loss Weapon

Can Hair Reveal Heart Risks?

Cinnamon: Tasty *and* Healthy

Cherry Juice for Better ZZZs

Should You Get the Flu Shot?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that nearly everyone over six months of age get the flu vaccine. Officials say it's especially important for healthcare workers and high-risk populations to get vaccinated, including pregnant women, young children, people 65 and older, and people with chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes and heart and lung disease.

Infants under six months old are at high risk for flu complications. But they're too young to get the vaccine. So anyone who takes care of them should get vaccinated to avoid infecting them.

The flu vaccine is given as a shot or a nose spray. The injection is approved for use in people over six months old. It contains inactivated or killed viruses. It cannot cause the flu. The nasal spray is approved for use in healthy people, 2 to 49, who aren't pregnant. It's made with live, weakened viruses that don't cause the flu.

Side effects. Some people who get the shot may develop a low-grade fever and/or redness, soreness and swelling at the injection site. Individuals who get the nasal spray may

develop mild symptoms, including a runny nose, headache, fever, sore throat or cough. Severe reactions are rare. But call your doctor if you develop a high fever, difficulty breathing or other serious symptoms.

Some people should not get the vaccine. Among them: infants under six months old, individuals with a severe allergy to chicken eggs (the flu vaccine is grown in eggs), and those who previously had a bad reaction.

Dose. Adults and most children need one dose of the flu vaccine each year. Some children younger than 9 may need two doses. A high-dose flu shot is available for people 65 and older.

The new vaccine protects against three viruses that scientists believe will be most common and are most likely to sicken people this flu season: an H3N2 virus, an influenza B virus and the H1N1 (a.k.a. "swine flu") virus that wreaked havoc last year.

To cut your risk of getting or spreading the flu, the CDC also recommends that you wash your hands a lot and sneeze and cough into a tissue or, at least, into your arm (*not your hand*).

Can Anger Hurt Your Heart?

Talk about karma. Angry? Mean? Aggressive? You might want to chill. A new study shows that hostile people may have an increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

According to the study, published in the journal *Hypertension*, nasty people tend to have greater thickening of their neck (carotid) arteries than easygoing folks. Thick neck artery walls are a risk factor for heart attacks and strokes.

Scientists from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) studied 5,614 residents on the Italian island Sardinia. They ranged in age from 14 to 94. Participants filled out standard personality questionnaires.

The results: The least agreeable people were about 40 percent more likely than pleasant people to have thickening in the lining of their neck arteries. This held even after researchers adjusted for smoking and other risk factors.

Three years later, the meanest of the bunch continued to have thickening of their artery walls.

Researchers said that agreeable people tend to be trusting, straightforward and show concern for others. Hostile people, on the other hand, tend to be distrustful, self-centered, arrogant and quick to express anger, according to the study.

Personality appeared to play a greater role in women. The researchers report that men in general had more thickening of their artery walls. But they said that nasty women tended to catch up and show similar risk.

According to the American Heart Association, there are about 1.2 million heart attacks and 800,000 strokes in the U.S. every year. Cardiovascular disease accounts for about one-third of all deaths in the U.S.

Researchers’ advice: Learn how to control anger and express it in more socially acceptable ways. Translation: *Be nice!*



“Secret” Weight Loss Weapon

Forget all those fad diets that promise you’ll melt away pounds in record time. There’s a “new” weight loss weapon that’s cheap, safe, and – (*gasp*) – actually works.

So what is this oh-so wondrous slimming potion?

Water!

Scientists report that dieters who downed two 8-ounce glasses of water before each meal during a 12-week study shed nearly five pounds more than those who didn’t drink water.

The study included 48 volunteers, ages 55 to 75. They were split into two groups. Both followed a low-calorie diet. But one group also drank two cups of water before meals.

The findings: The water drinkers each lost about 15.5 pounds and the non-drinkers each unloaded about 11 pounds.

Researchers believe water works simply by filling up the stomach with a zero-cal substance. As a result, people feel fuller and eat fewer calorie-busting foods during meals.

Obesity has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and many other disorders. It puts an extra burden on the lungs and heart – and can worsen symptoms of COPD, asthma and other chronic ills.

So drink up!



Can Hair Reveal Heart Risks?

Stress is a part of everyday life. Think bills, traffic, juggling kids and work.... Like most things, a little bit won’t hurt you. And, in some cases, it’s even helpful. Our body’s “fight and flight” response is designed to protect us when we’re in danger. And that’s just what sudden spikes of cortisol do in our bodies.

But it’s not healthy if cortisol levels are always high. Cortisol is a so-called stress hormone. Our bodies produce more of it when we’re worried. That means if we’re stressed a lot, our cortisol levels are high a lot.

Over the long term, elevated cortisol levels can hike blood pressure, blood sugar, body fat and blood clotting. These are risk factors for heart attacks and other medical problems. Previous studies have linked chronic stress to an increased risk for cardiovascular and other diseases. But there was no scientific way to measure stress over time.

Scientists traditionally have measured stress by the amount of cortisol in blood, urine or saliva samples. But that only shows levels at the time of the tests. Now researchers have developed a

way to gauge long-term stress by measuring cortisol in the hair. This works because cortisol builds up in the hair shaft, according to the study that appeared online in the journal *Stress*.

For the study, Canadian scientists measured cortisol levels in 3-centimeter-long hair strands from 56 men in the hospital. Some of the patients had suffered heart attacks; others were hospitalized for different reasons.

The findings: hair from the heart attack patients contained higher levels of cortisol. The researchers estimate that hair grows about a centimeter (just under half an inch) a month. So they could measure patients’ cortisol or stress levels over about three months.

The researchers considered many heart attack risk factors. But they found that cortisol in the hair was the strongest heart attack predictor, according to the study. The message? Relax. *Your health could depend on it!*



Cinnamon: Tasty and Healthy

Cinnamon may do more than just spice up your French toast and afternoon cappuccino. Seems it also – hold onto your shakers – may help reduce risk factors linked to heart disease and diabetes.

During a small U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study, 22 obese volunteers with pre-diabetes (high blood sugar levels) were split into two groups. They were given either a placebo or 250 milligrams of dried water-soluble cinnamon extract twice daily.

Researchers measured the level of glucose (sugar) and antioxidants in participants’ blood at the start of the study. They measured it again



after six and 12 weeks. Antioxidants are nutrients that enhance the body’s infection-fighting ability. They also help keep substances called free radicals (cigarette smoke, sun, pollution) from hurting us. Free radicals have been linked to premature aging and chronic conditions, including diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

The study results, published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*: Subjects who took the cinnamon extract had 13 to 23 percent less sugar and higher levels of antioxidants in their blood.

Sweet!